

EFL Saudi Student's attitudes toward peer feedback activities in a writing class

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine Saudi female students' attitude toward peer feedback activity in writing classes with a list of questions for the students to follow during the activity, and to investigate the challenges that may prevent the use of such activity in Saudi EFL classes.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used a mixed-methods to ensure the credibility of the data and obtain clear descriptions about the topic. The study instruments are (1) Writing Essays, (2) Writing Checklist, (3) Questionnaire and (4) Semi-structured interview. The data were analysis with SPSS and o 10 software.

Findings – The study results indicated that students had a positive attitude toward peer feedback with a checklist in EFL writing class. For instance, their second written essay (post) has improved and has fewer mistakes than the first one. Also, most of the participants stated that peer feedback has improved their writing quality and has enhanced their writing awareness of their weaknesses and mistakes. Moreover, the interview had highlighted the main challenges that could affect using peer feedback in writing class. Finally, the results indicate the efficiency of peer feedback with a checklist in similar teaching contexts.

Research limitations/implications – The study focused on a small number of participants (30 students). Besides, the study dealt with students at university level only and the study focused on female students.

Practical implications – Based on the study finding, it is recommended that peer feedback should be integrated in all EFL writing classes at all levels. Based on the study finding, it is recommended that peer feedback should be incorporated in all EFL writing classes at all levels. Using checklist can help the students to become more independent learners and in time they will be able to correct their own mistakes.

Originality/value – This paper fulfills an identified need to identify how integrating peer feedback activity in writing class can improve the students' writing performance and help them to be independent learners.

Keywords EFL, Attitude, Peer feedback, Writing class, Checklist

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Writing has become an essential technique in EFL classes. In fact, since the late 1980s, the focus of teaching writing has changed from product to process. The teachers focus more on the student process in writing rather than the final product. Thus, the process of many writing activities is designed to make teachers and students work together to develop and organize the students' ideas in writing by receiving multiple drafts (Scane *et al.*, 1991, p. 41).

In practice, a well-written paper contains many processes, starting from developing an idea, organizing, writing different drafts, adopting teacher's and students' feedback, and finishing with revising the work before submitting the assignments (Shannon, 1994). Moreover, Berridge (2009, p. 14) mentioned that writing process is necessary because it allows for different steps that can improve anyone's writing.



There are various processes that can be used in EFL writing classes and peer feedback is one of them (Mi-mi, 2009). Thus, many researchers have indicated that peer feedback could be a helpful process through the different levels of the writing class (Rollinson, 2005). In recent days, peer feedback has begun to receive attention in EFL writing classes around the world: this technique is known as peer feedback, peer review, peer evaluating, peer revision and peer editing (Liu and Hansen, 2002).

Peer feedback is a beneficial method in teaching writing. It allows the students to revise their papers several times before the final submission. The main goal behind peer feedback activity is to develop the students' critical thinking and to review their work (Leki, 1990; Zhang, 1995). Thus, such activity will bring active students and learners into the classroom and will produce a real sense of creativity (Mendonca and Johnson, 1994).

According to Rao and DiCarlo (2000), students use different methods during feedback negotiations such as giving suggestions, asking questions, offering explanations, and correcting grammar mistakes. Althausser and Darnall (2001) stated that peer teaching during peer review activities introduces the students to new concepts and improves their comprehensive skills.

In the Arab world, several researchers such as Al-Jamhoor (2005), Al-Jarf (2004), and Al-Qahtani (2003) found that cooperative writing classes with peers of the target language increase the students writing abilities and provide them with useful feedback.

On the other hand, other scholars have stated that some students believe that their classmates are not qualified to evaluate their writings and correct their mistakes, or able to give explicit comments (Ferries, 2003). Some students only accept their teachers' feedback and corrections and do not trust peers' feedback (Mi-mi, 2009).

This study aims to examine the Saudi female students' attitude toward peer feedback effectiveness in writing classes with a list of questions for the students to follow during peer feedback activity and to investigate the challenges that may prevent the use of such activity in Saudi EFL classes.

Literature review

EFL writing

Writing skills are usually learned last, but their importance is similar to other skills (Bailey *et al.*, 1974). Writing skill has particular importance in academic fields and most of EFL teaching classes. However, many scholars have stated that despite the significance and importance of writing skill in communication, it seems that it is neglected in both first and foreign languages (Dempsey *et al.*, 2009; Badger and White, 2000; White and Arndt, 1991).

Writing in EFL is not an easy task for many learners. Many researchers such as Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), Hinkel (2004) and Zhang (1995) highlighted the differences between teaching L1 and L2, which can be linked to the different social and instructive characteristics of each together with the students' different linguistics features. Leki and Carson (1997) stated that EFL writers have a different writing experience from their first language. According to Hinkel (2004), most non-native students (NNS) face a considerable amount of difficulty writing in English, even with an advanced level of study.

Feedback in writing classes

According to Kepner (1991), the feedback concept is widely used in EFL literature, and it means, "Any procedure used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong." However, Asiri (1997, p. 5) argued that writing is a creative activity; therefore, it is not appropriate to define feedback as a technique to inform the writer whether his writing is right or wrong.

Moreover, Pol *et al.* (2008), Rollinson (2005), and Topping (1998, 2000) suggested that peer feedback could be an educational instrument where the students can comment on their

classmates' written work for a formative or summative goal. Storch (2004) believed that peer feedback has theoretical and educational roots. However, Storch mentioned that the use of peer feedback is limited in EFL class because there is a lack of literature on peer feedback in EFL class. Saito and Fujita (2004) highlighted the importance of peer feedback as they believe that peer feedback could be a useful assessment tool in schools.

Moreover, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), Saito and Fujita (2004), Storch (2004) and Ferris (2003) believe that peer feedback helps the students to become more aware of their performance and able to notice the gaps in their work. Also, researchers think that peer feedback improves the students' reading and writing skills and they become more self-expressive. In a recent study, Lundstorm and Baker (2009) added that peer review is useful both for those who provide it and those who receive it.

In fact, students' participation in peer feedback helps them to improve critical analysis and culture of reflection in their learning process. Many researchers have mentioned that writing is not an individual process but a task where peer feedback should have a vital role (Liou and Peng, 2009). Thus, integrating peer feedback in writing class will help the students to produce new ideas and views and improve their performance in writing (Lundstorm and Baker, 2009). De Brusa and Harutyunyan (2019) have affirmed that peer feedback has a positive effect on improving students' academic writing and communicative skills.

On the other hand, Min (2008) found that peer feedback only made a marginal difference on students' written work, and teachers' comments were more valuable and effective. Hinkel (2004) cited a study done by Carson and Nelson (1996) that mentioned that some students found difficulty in providing honest comments on their peers' work because they want to keep a positive social relationship with each other. Storch (2004) argued that most of the students focus on writing products not process. Storch found that student's feedback was mainly on the sentences' local errors, rather than the content and ideas.

Rollinson (2005) has referred to the time spent in the peer feedback method; he found that the students needed more time to discuss their drafts with each other and that was not always possible for some EFL classes. Therefore, Kunwongse (2013) has suggested that to have the best of peer feedback activity, students need to be trained on how to make peer feedback effectively and accurately.

In addition, there is a general concern that the effectiveness of peer feedback is will be affected by the students' low level in the language, and students' errors and unsuitable attitudes toward peer feedback (Hu, 2005). Other scholars believe that peer feedback is not useful as teacher feedback that improves EFL students' writing class (Ruegg, 2015). Besides, Chong (2010) has added that teacher's negative views on the effectiveness of peer feedback could affect this process.

Students' attitudes toward peer feedback

Most EFL studies have shown a positive reaction from the students toward the use of peer feedback. For instance, Mangelsdorf's (1992) study used participants from 17 countries to examine the students' attitudes toward peer feedback. The finding showed that the majority of the participants found peer feedback efficient in improving the students' written work. Leki's (1990) study members were 20 EFL students and there was a question to the students about the usefulness of peer review in EFL class. Most of the answers were positive and the students believe in the importance of peer feedback, and only a few negative responses were reported.

However, other studies revealed that EFL students did not always prefer the peer feedback method. According to his study finding, Zhang (1995) stated that over 90% of the students preferred teacher feedback rather than peer feedback. Additionally, Curtis' (1997) research, which took place in Hong Kong, showed that the students chose teacher feedback rather than peer feedback.

According to [Jensen and Jensen \(2011\)](#) some EFL studies found several problems that faced peer feedback activities. For instance, some students felt it was difficult to comment on their peer work because of their lack of knowledge; they feel they are not qualified enough. Moreover, [Hanrahan and Isaacs \(2001\)](#) and [Topping \(1998\)](#) suggested that peer feedback might increase students' anxiety because letting your friend read your incomplete work can raise many problems for some students. Students feel nervous because they are not sure of what will happen next and using a structured form of feedback could solve such problems.

Purpose of the study

This study aims to examine the attitudes of Saudi female EFL students toward the use of peer feedback with checklists in EFL writing classes. Moreover, it seeks to investigate the challenges that may affect using such activity. It will also focus on Saudi female students studying at the College of Languages and Translation at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. In addition, this study highlights the effectiveness of peer feedback on the students' writing process and how it can decrease the students' anxiety during writing class. Furthermore, the present study's findings may be a useful tool in testing the validity of using peer feedback activities to improve Saudi students' writing levels.

Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) To what extent does peer feedback activity improve students' writing?
- (2) What are students' attitudes toward the use of peer feedback in EFL writing class?
- (3) What challenges are faced when applying peer feedback activity in EFL writing class?

Significance of the study

This study attempts to shed light on university-level female students' attitudes toward applying peer feedback activity in EFL writing classes in the Saudi context. The current study is significant for the following reasons:

- (1) There are only a few studies on this topic (peer feedback) in the Arab context and in Saudi Arabia in particular.
- (2) The results of this study may provide a guideline for EFL teachers on whether using peer feedback is an efficient technique to improve students' writing skills or not.
- (3) Finally, despite the fact that many studies have studied the students' attitudes inside writing classes, this study will focus on how students receive comments and suggestions from their peers and how such feedback could affect their writing performance.

Methodology

Population and sampling

The participants of this study were 30 female students (level 2) between 19 and 21 years, at the College of Languages and Translation at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. The students write different types of short essays during the course and they have two tests each semester, one mid-term and one final test.

Study tools

Writing Checklist

A checklist was formed to guide the students in analyzing their peer's work. The study checklist was adopted from Merriam's (2009) study with slight modification. It contained questions that encourage students to analyze, evaluate and comment on their peer's work. An example of a list question is "Did the writer start with a topic sentence?", if "Yes," underline it, and if "No," suggest one. The checklist consisted of three parts, which are: Content, Organization and style, Grammar, and form.

Questionnaire

To examine the participant students' attitude toward peer feedback activity with a checklist, of questionnaire was adopted from Kim (2009) and Tsui and Ng's research (2000) with slight modification. It consisted of four parts. The first part was general information about the participant's name, age, and level of study. The second part was the participant's attitude toward peer feedback and contained ten statements. The third part was about the peers' relationship with each other and consisted of five statements. The fourth part included five statements regarding motivation and anxiety.

The second, third and fourth parts of the questionnaire were closed-ended questions based on a four-point Likert-type scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Robson, 1993). The students were asked to express their degree of willingness by choosing one of the following: "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree" and "strongly disagree." To avoid any misunderstanding of the questionnaire parts, the teacher explained it in detail at the beginning of the class.

Interviews

For the study purpose, the researcher interviewed five students. The interview was used in conjunction with the questionnaire's main ideas to provide in-depth insight into the study data. In fact, qualitative data such as interviews provides an in-depth understanding of what questionnaires may lack (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, 2007; Tierney and Dille, 2001). In addition, a face-to-face interview is an interaction and exchange of ideas and information between the researcher and the participant (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

The main purpose of the interview was to give the students a chance to speak freely in a less structured form. The interview form consisted of six different questions. It started with general information about the participant, moving on to specific questions about the participant's attitude toward peer feedback and the main challenges for such technique. All interviews took place at the department, and all were conducted shortly after the essay and questionnaire classes. The interview took around 5–10 min; it was in English, but the students were free to speak Arabic.

Procedures

The study required data were collected within 8 weeks during the semester. The students wrote different types of paragraphs during the course such as descriptive, compare-contrast and informative paragraphs. The study has focused only on one type of essay which is the descriptive essay. And to ensure the research effectiveness, the teacher explained the checklist figures in detail to the students before they were asked to participate in the activity.

After the students had written a descriptive essay in one of their classes, the teacher asked them to work with a peer and everyone to exchange their essays. Each student had a copy of the checklist and she was asked to comment and correct their peer's essay based on the given

list. During the peer review, students provided suggestions and comments by answering the checklist questions. While the students were working, the teacher walked around the students and re-explained any difficult parts to them.

Later, when the session ended the students chose to what extent they wanted to use their peer's suggestions and comments. They rewrote their essays and handed them to their teacher at the next class, together with the first draft and checklist to be corrected. A total of 60 essays (first and revised draft) were examined. And the time between the 1st essay and the final draft was 4 weeks.

After the students finished their essay, a closed-ended questionnaire was used. The teacher asked the students to answer the questionnaire questions based on what they had done in the peer feedback session. Each statement in the questionnaire had been explained either in English or the students' native language (Arabic).

Moreover, five students were interviewed after the questionnaire. A short interview (5–10 min) was adopted in conjunction with the questionnaire's main ideas. The students who agreed to be interviewed discussed their ideas and attitudes toward peer feedback with the researcher in detail.

Validity and reliability

An analytic evaluation procedure was used to ensure the study's reliability in rating the students' essays. This assessment tool was suggested by [Lundstorm and Baker \(2009\)](#) and adapted from [Paulus \(1999\)](#), and [Weigle's \(2002\)](#) recommendations were used, too. The scoring system is based on a ten-point scale, and the students' essays were scored from 1 to 10 for the first and revised drafts. The score is based on the essay development, organization, structure and vocabulary. In addition, all the essays are graded by two persons, the researcher and the students' teacher.

Triangulation

Triangulation is defined as the use of two or more methods in the study data collection ([Cohen et al., 2007](#)). Many educational researchers including [Cohen et al. \(2000, 2007\)](#), [Clough and Nutbrown \(2007\)](#), [Weir \(2005\)](#) and [Gillham \(2000\)](#) believe that triangulation is an essential aspect of study validity and reliability. To ensure study triangulation, multiple methods were used in data collection: first, a sample of the students' writing was analyzed; second, a closed-ended questionnaire was addressed; third, five students were interviewed; and finally, a peer-editing checklist was introduced.

Data analysis

The first method used was the participants' written work. The student writing was scored according to [Lundstorm and Baker \(2009\)](#), which were adopted from [Weigle's \(2002\)](#) and [Cohen's \(1994\)](#) list of writing aspects, as mentioned previously. The classification essay (first and revised drafts) was marked by, the researcher and the students' writing teacher. The scoring guide was based on a ten-point scale, structure, organization, development, vocabulary and cohesion. Then, a Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program was run to examine the differences between the two scores of each participant.

The second method was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was one of the chosen methods for several reasons. First, because it is an effective tool on a small or large scale. Second, the limited time frame allowed for this study made it beneficial. Third, it allowed the participants to express their ideas and thoughts freely ([Seliger and Shohamy, 1989](#); [McDonough and McDonough, 1997](#); [Cohen et al., 2000](#)). The questionnaire quantitative data were analyzed with the SPSS software.

Third, the interview qualitative data were analyzed with NVivo 10 software. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis program that has been formed for researchers with text-based information. The interview is less structured than the other methods (the essay and the questionnaire); it was more natural and recommended qualitative modes were used. The recommended modes were suggested and developed by some academic researchers such as Clough and Nutbrown (2007), Cohen *et al.* (2000, 2007).

Results

Writing Essays result

Each student's pre and post essays were analyzed to determine to what extent peer feedback has affected students writing. By following Cohen's (1994) list of writing aspects and Weigle's (2002) "analytic scoring approach," the students' grades were as Table 1.

From Table 1 and Figure 1, it is noticeable that most of the students' writings improved. However, one student's writing (No. 8) did not change and her written essay was at the same level before and after editing. Although her peer provided her with valuable comments and suggestions, student No. 8 did not follow her peer's checklist. On the other hand, the written essays of two students (No. 14 and 26) were highly improved (30%); while most of the students achieved an average improvement of between 10 and 20%.

The students' second writing was better in form and grammar (Figure 1). Most of the edited mistakes were grammatical aspects such as verb tenses and or lexical features such as wrong or misspelled words. Other errors included a missing essay title or topic sentence. Moreover, content, organization, structure and style have been improved significantly in the second essay. However, many students faced difficulty in finding the essay topic sentence or identifying the essay's main ideas.

Table 2 shows that the students' grades mean before the peer checklist was 5.133 while after the peer feedback with a checklist it became 6.566. The essays' overall mean increased about 14%, which explains the usefulness of peer feedback with a checklist in EFL writing class.

Results of the questionnaire

The students answered a questionnaire form adopted from Kim's (2009) and Tsui and Ng's research (2000) with modifications. The sample was 30 female students, at the College of Languages and Translation at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. The survey figures addressed their attitude toward feedback with a checklist, the peers' relationship with each other, and how peer feedback increases students' motivation and reduces their anxiety in the EFL writing class. The students' responses to the questionnaire form are covered in the next section.

Students' attitude toward feedback with checklist. The students were asked to reply to ten four-point, Likert-type items to measure their attitude toward peer feedback in EFL writing class. As seen in Table 3, the score for the general mean is 2.83. This indicates that most participants agreed on the usefulness of peer feedback with a checklist in EFL writing class.

The highest mean score was 3.13 for items number 3, 4 and 5 in Table 4 above. For item number three most of the participants (30% strongly agree and 57% agree) believed that peer feedback had improved their writing's grammar and spelling. For item number four most of the participants (33% strongly agree and 50% agree) agreed that peer feedback helped them find their weaknesses and correct their mistakes in the first draft. And for item number five, the majority of the students (30% strongly agree and 53% agree) thought that their second draft was better than the first one because of peer feedback. Another high mean score was

PRR

Student No	Before peer editing	After peer editing	Differences	Differences in percentage
1	6	8	2	20
2	6	7	1	10
3	4	5	1	10
4	4	6	2	20
5	5	7	2	20
6	2	3	1	10
7	6	8	2	20
8	3	3	0	0
9	4	5	1	10
10	5	6	1	10
11	4	5	1	10
12	5	6	1	10
13	7	8	1	10
14	6	9	3	30
15	6	8	2	20
16	6	8	2	20
17	7	8	1	10
18	6	7	1	10
19	5	7	2	20
20	7	8	1	10
21	6	7	1	10
22	6	8	2	20
23	7	8	1	10
24	5	7	2	20
25	5	6	1	10
26	5	8	3	30
27	3	4	1	10
28	6	7	1	10
29	5	6	1	10
30	2	4	2	20

Table 1.
The differences between the two essays grades

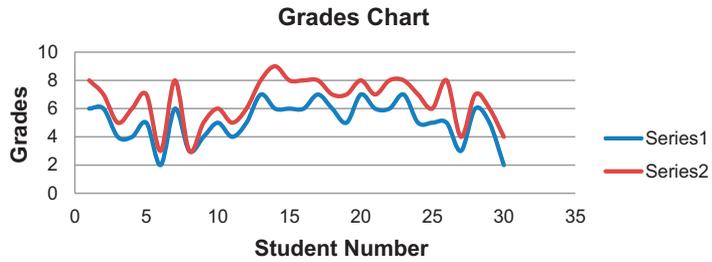


Figure 1.
Students' writing marks before and after peer editing

Source	Variance	df	Mean	p-value
Before peer editing	1.912	29	5.133	1.108E-12
After peer editing	2.598	29	6.566	2.216E-12

Table 2.
T-test: paired two sample for means

2.90 for item number 2. This indicates that the majority of the participants (23% strongly agree and 53% agree) felt that peer feedback had improved their writing in content and organization.

Moreover, 7% of the students strongly agree and 60% of them agree, with a mean score of 2.87 for item number 7, that peer feedback had improved their writing in general. Also, more than two-thirds of the participants do trust peer feedback (10% strongly agree and 67% agree); while 13% of the students strongly agreed and 60% agreed that peer feedback should be used in EFL writing class. The lowest mean score was 2.30 for item number 9 when most of the students (43% disagree and 17% strongly disagree) that their peer should not correct their writing.

Relationship with peers. The students were asked to reply to five four-point Likert-type items to highlight their peer's relationship in EFL writing class. As seen in Table 5, the score for the general mean is 2.88. This indicates that most of the participants had a positive attitude toward peer feedback effectiveness in encouraging students' collaboration in EFL writing class.

As is seen in Table 5 the highest mean score was 3.00 for item 2. This indicates that most of the participants (10% strongly agree and 80% agree) do their best when improving their peer's draft. In addition, item number one received a high mean score of 2.97. More than two-thirds of the students (30% strongly agree and 47% agree) enjoyed discussing their essay's ideas with their classmates.

Dimensions	No. of items	General mean	Attitudes
1. Attitude toward peer feedback	10	2.83	Agreed
2. Relation with peers	5	2.88	Agreed
3. Motivation and anxiety	5	2.85	Agreed

Table 3. Students' attitudes toward peer feedback with a checklist

Attitude toward feedback	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1-I Trust peer feedback	3	10%	20	67%	5	17%	2	7%	2.80	0.28
2-Peer feedback has improved my writing content and organization	7	23%	16	53%	4	13%	3	10%	2.90	0.20
3-Peer feedback has improved my writing grammar and spelling	9	30%	17	57%	3	10%	1	3%	3.13	0.24
4-Peer feedback helps me to find my weakness and mistakes in my draft	10	33%	15	50%	4	13%	1	3%	3.13	0.21
5-My second draft is better than the first one because of peer feedback	9	30%	16	53%	5	17%	0	0%	3.13	0.23
6-Peer feedback provides me with new ideas	2	7%	18	60%	7	23%	3	10%	2.63	0.24
7-Peer feedback helps me to improve my writing	4	13%	20	67%	4	13%	2	7%	2.87	0.28
8-I Don't trust my peer suggestions and corrections	2	7%	15	50%	13	43%	0	0%	2.63	0.25
9-I Believe my peer should not correct my writing	2	7%	10	33%	13	43%	5	17%	2.30	0.16
10-I Think peer feedback activity should be applied in English class	4	13%	18	60%	6	20%	2	7%	2.80	0.24
General mean									2.83	

Table 4. Mean scores for student attitudes toward peer feedback with a checklist

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Peers' relationships	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1-I Enjoy discussing ideas about my writing with my classmate	9	30%	14	47%	4	13%	3	10%	2.97	0.17
2-I work best when helping my peer to improve her draft	3	10%	24	80%	3	10%	0	0%	3.00	0.37
3-I Believe my peer tries her best to help me improve my drafts	8	27%	15	50%	4	13%	3	10%	2.93	0.18
4- Now I have a stronger relationship with my peer	7	23%	8	27%	11	37%	4	13%	2.60	0.10
5-Peer feedback makes me believe in the concept of cooperation	7	23%	15	50%	6	20%	2	7%	2.90	0.18
General mean									2.88	

Table 5. Mean scores for student attitudes toward relationships with peers

Moreover, most of the students believed that their peer had done her best in improving and correcting their work with a mean score of 2.93 (27% strongly agree and 50% agree). In item 5, 23% of the students have “strongly agree” and 50% of them “agree” that peer feedback activity has strengthened their beliefs in the cooperation concept. The lowest mean score was for item 4 where the students’ responses were different: 23% strongly agree, 27% agree, 37% disagree and 13% strongly disagree. The students’ attitudes toward their peer relationship strength differ; most disagreed with 37%.

Peer feedback effects on students’ anxiety and motivation. The students were asked to respond to five four-point, Likert-type items to measure their attitudes toward peer feedback in increasing the students’ motivation and reducing anxiety in writing class. The general mean score was 2.85. This means that most of the students agree with all of the five items in [Table 6](#).

The highest mean score was 3.00 for item number 1; the majority of the participants (20% strongly agree and 63% agree) found that their peer’s correction embarrassed them. However, 23% of the students “strongly agree” and 53% of the students “agree” that peer feedback helped them to learn in a relaxed way, with a mean score of 2.93.

In addition, about two-thirds of the students “agree” and “strongly agree” that peer feedback increased their confidence in writing while 23% of the students “strongly agree” and 43% “agree” that peer feedback changed their attitude toward writing positively.

Motivation and anxiety	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1- My peer’s correction of my draft embarrasses me	6	20%	19	63%	4	13%	1	3%	3.00	0.26
2- I feel that peer feedback makes me learn in a more relaxed way	7	23%	16	53%	5	17%	2	7%	2.93	0.20
3- Peer feedback makes me more confident when I write	5	17%	17	57%	6	20%	2	7%	2.83	0.22
4- Peer feedbacks have changed my attitude toward writing in a positive way	7	23%	13	43%	6	20%	4	13%	2.77	0.13
5- In the future, I will ask a peer to review my draft	8	27%	10	33%	8	27%	4	13%	2.73	0.08
General mean									2.85	

Table 6. Mean scores for student attitudes toward peer feedback effect on motivation and anxiety

Finally, the lowest mean score for this section was 2.73. Most of the participants (27% strongly agree and 33% agree) felt that they would ask a peer to review their writing in the future.

Interview results

The interview results were analyzed with NVivo 10 software. Five students were interviewed. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview took about 10–15 min with six different questions. It started with general information about the participant, then moved on to more specific questions about peer feedback technique. The interview was in English, but the students could replay in English, Arabic or both.

According to the first interview question, all of the five students were in level two and their age was between 19 and 22 years old. In the second question, the students agreed that this was the first time they had used peer feedback activity, except for one student for the third time. The last four interview questions were analyzed with the NVivo 10 program on the following points:

Peer comments and colleague's discussion. All of the interviewed students agreed that there were some valuable suggestions and comments in peer activity. And they agreed that they did not discuss the comments with their peers. However, one student did discuss her paper with her peer briefly; because good students have better ideas and a higher level of English and that surely would improve their writing if they discussed their work together. In addition, the students stated that spelling and grammar were the most common mistakes.

Improving learners' skills in EFL classes. The students believed that the peer feedback technique is very useful in EFL writing class especially for advanced level, because the advanced level has a higher level of English language, and thus peer feedback is easier to apply. Moreover, the students mentioned that practice and training would help them to manage peer feedback activity. On the other hand, two students thought that peer feedback would be more functional without a peer checklist by using group discussion instead.

Positive attitude toward peer feedback. The students agreed that peer feedback helped them to be more independent learners. Peer feedback improved their skills in writing in many ways. Moreover, peer feedback enabled them to express their ideas freely and helped them to become critical thinkers. In addition, peer feedback improved their communication skills and students started to discuss their ideas with their classmates. Only one student disagreed with them because she believed that it takes longer and more practice to be independent.

Challenges in peer feedback technique. The interviewed students' main fear in peer feedback was their low level of English because they were in level two. They believed that they were not always able to provide their peers with the correct comments. Second,

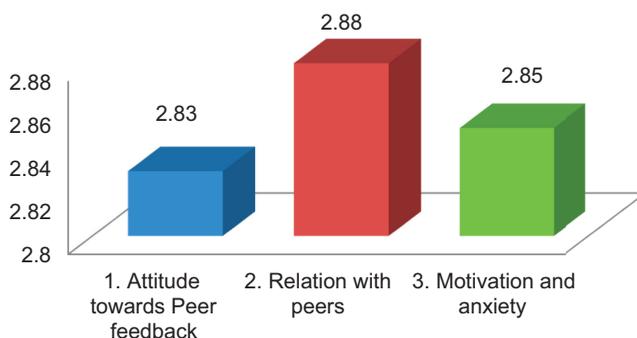


Figure 2. Graph showing students' attitudes toward peer feedback with a checklist

another problem appeared when the peers had different levels of English. Thus, sometimes a student might correct the right word of her peer's with the wrong one. Third, the time factor was a big problem. Peer feedback usually takes a long time and needs more writing classes to get the work done. Fourth, this is related to our culture: peers are usually friends and they will be nervous about correcting each other's papers and thus might avoid correcting all of their friend's mistakes. Finally, the interviewed students stated that some students did not take peer feedback techniques seriously and did not work hard with their peers.

Discussion

The influence of peer feedback activity on the students' writing

Previous researches have shown positive relationship between using peer feedback and improving the students' level of writing (Mendonca and Johnson, 1994; Villamil and de Guerrero, 1996; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Topping, 2000; Althausser and Darnall, 2001). The present study findings revealed that the students agreed that peer feedback with a checklist improved their writing in EFL class. The study showed that with peer feedback the students decreased their fear and anxiety during writing class and became more relaxed. Moreover, peer feedback changed the students' attitude toward writing positively.

The students' attitude toward using peer feedback in EFL writing class

The questionnaire and the interview indicated that the students enjoyed discussing their ideas with their peers improved their commendation skills. Also, peer feedback strengthened their beliefs in the cooperation concept. This finding is similar to that of Hirose (2006) who suggests that peer feedback activity has encouraged students' cooperative work.

Moreover, the study's methods showed that the students had a positive attitude toward the effectiveness of peer feedback in writing class; and there are previous studies that support this result (e.g. Al-Qurashi, 2009; Aoun, 2008; Engler, 1998; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson and Murphy, 1992; Mendoca and Johnson, 1994; Raimes, 1983; Van Den Berg *et al.*, 2006).

Students agreed that peer feedback with a checklist improved their writing contents, organization, structure and grammatical features. It also helped them to find their mistakes that they had not been aware of before. Those findings contradict some scholars such as Leki (1991), believes that students do not trust their peer comments and corrections because they are at the same level of language acquisition.

Challenges that face peer feedback activity

Most of the students agreed that time consumption was one of the main problems. If there is not enough time the students will not correct their peer's paper effectively. This contributes to Rollinson's (2005) finding which states that many students agreed about the time factor.

Another problem arose when the peers are at different levels of proficiency, in which case the student with the lower level may correct something that is already correct. This finding is similar to Mangelsdorf (1992), who believes that students need more time to manage peer feedback techniques.

Conclusions and recommendations

Summary

Previous researches on EFL class have shown that peer feedback is an effective tool in the writing class and learners have a positive attitude toward it. The present study has

attempted to ascertain learners' attitudes toward using peer feedback with a checklist in college-level students at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh. The participants included 30 female students in level 2 between the ages of 19 and 21 years old.

The study's main aim was to examine the students' attitude toward using peer feedback with a checklist in EFL writing class. Peer feedback is considered to be a collaborative skill that requires the students' interaction inside the class. This way peer feedback has been related to many types of research about writing in EFL class. Previous studies have demonstrated numerous advantages of using peer feedback in writing class, as it develops the final writing product, and improves many other skills, such as the students' communication. The finding of this study is similar to many different theories in EFL literature, where the students appreciate peer feedback and have positive attitude toward it (Montgomery and Baker, 2007; Miao *et al.*, 2006; Ferris, 2002).

The study employed three different methods: a written essay, questionnaire and interview. First, all of the students wrote pre and post essays, one before the peer checklist and one after it. Second, all students completed the questionnaire to measure their attitude toward peer feedback with a checklist. Finally, five of the students were interviewed.

The study findings proved that most students had a positive attitude toward peer feedback with a checklist. The written essay showed a noticeable improvement in the students' writing quality after the peer feedback, and the questionnaire and interview results showed that the students mostly agreed that peer feedback improved their writing skills and reduced anxiety in writing class. Most of the students enjoyed discussing their ideas with their peers and correcting their papers after the class according to their peer's comments.

Implications of the study

Based on the study finding, it is recommended that peer feedback should be integrated into all EFL writing classes at all levels. Obviously, because of the students' lack of experience in peer feedback, extra training and practice are needed to become familiar with the new techniques. This recommendation complements perfectly previous studies including Chaudron (1984), Jacobs *et al.* (1998), Miao *et al.* (2006) and Ellis *et al.* (2008).

Another suggestion is that teachers can design their checklist to fit each writing assignment. With this technique, teachers can develop an interactive environment inside the class. Furthermore, the checklist can help the students to become more independent learners and in time they will be able to correct their own mistakes.

Recommendations for further researches

There are some recommendations and suggestions which are:

- (1) The study focused on a small number of participants (30 students). Replicating the study with significant number of EFL students from different universities would enhance the study result.
- (2) The study dealt with students at the university level; the same study could be conducted with students in schools rather than colleges.
- (3) The study focused on female students. Hence, further study could examine the male attitude toward peer feedback with a checklist.
- (4) Finally, the study has focused on the descriptive essay, further studies could examine other types of essay.

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